

His reason for life. Not living, but life. by ohmybgosh

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Summary:

Basically just the Harringrove edition of the library scene from Atonement

His reason for life. Not living, but life.

Author's Note:

- For [hopphorn](#).

For you, my friend!

It's a bit out of order, and I decided to leave out the part where Briony (in this case Mike) walks in on them during, because yeah, no need to scar anyone for life. The title is from Atonement (the novel)! Also the quote at the end is from Act 1, Scene 3, lines 125-29 :)

“What I don’t get is why didn’t Othello just ask Desdemona, y’know?” Steve sighed deeply, running his fingers through his hair. “Murder seems too extreme.”

Billy shrugged, leaning back in his chair and examining his fingernails. He nibbled at the corner of one. “He thought she was unfaithful.”

“Yeah but she wasn’t,” Steve argued. He flipped through his copy of *Othello* , hardcover, without a scratch and looking like it came from the Harrington’s private library. Billy’s copy, on the table untouched, was a battered paperback from the Hawkins Public Library, where they currently sat. Its pages were dogeared and there was a stain of questionable orientation on the index.

“And even if she was, you’d think murder would be kind of an over exaggeration,” Steve continued. He frowned at the text.

Billy made a noncommittal noise. He was having trouble concentrating on studying. He tried to focus on the text in front of him, but his gaze kept slipping to Steve, who bit his lip when he tried to make sense of the lines, who stretched and whose gray t-shirt with the little green alligator on the front pocket slipped up to reveal a small snapshot of smooth skin and scattered freckles, whose thick brown hair fell into his deep brown eyes when he leaned in to squint

at Shakespeare.

Damn Steve, he wasn't even aware of what he was doing. Billy was already hard in his jeans.

Billy sat up, crossing one leg over the other.

How to get Steve alone? Steve was too focused; he wouldn't follow Billy outside to his car, to be as discreet as possible in the backseat or speed off and stop in an empty parking lot or in a lonely field.

No, Billy would have to find a quiet spot in the library.

It was already a fairly quiet day, a Sunday afternoon, when most Hawkins residents went grocery shopping after Church or spent the day lazing about at home, possibly getting some yard work done, perhaps preparing a casserole for dinner that night. Apart from Billy and Steve, the library was nearly deserted; the librarian sat at his desk, poring over a thick dusty tome with half-moon glasses sliding down the tip of his ancient nose.

“I think,” Billy began, stopping for a moment to catch his breath. His voice was higher than usual, and his pulse was pounding too hard in his ears. Steve always did this to him, made his heart hammer and skin sweaty. And the most annoying part was that Steve had no idea what he was doing. Steve, slightly oblivious to things unless someone waved it in front of his face, could get Billy all hot and bothered simply by existing, by being himself, by doing something so small like scratching the tip of his nose while he tried to understand Shakespeare.

“I think,” Billy tried again, swallowing. “I think we’ll have to consult an outside source.”

“Huh?” Steve looked up, bemused. “What source?”

“Another book. Over here.” He stood, his chair scraping back in the silence of the library. He heard the soft cluck of the librarian’s tongue, *tch*.

“What book?” Steve stood as well, flipping *Othello* closed. “I’ll go ask for the call number.”

“No! No, I already know it.”

Steve narrowed his eyes at him. “You do?”

“Yup. Checked it out before.”

“What is it?” Steve looked suspicious.

“C’mon, I’ll show you.” He beckoned for Steve over his shoulder, and led the way to the back of the library, weaving through aisles.

“Billy, seriously, what are you showing me? Because if it’s another snake or something gross I’m going to punch you.”

Billy smirked. Steve hated snakes, even the dead ones that didn’t move. There was a snake in the grass a week ago outside of the high school, basking in the late spring sunshine, and Billy dragged Steve over to see it. It was harmless, and it slithered away as soon as they were close enough to touch it, but Steve still backed away several feet, looking green. He got Billy back the next day though, when they were searching for a basketball in the Harrington’s basement, and Steve found a fat black spider sitting on a bike pump. He kept trying to get Billy closer (“I swear it’s not a spider, it’s just a really cool beetle”) and Billy, stumbling up the basement stairs, insisted after that he was not scared (“Can you just fucking kill it, Harrington?”).

“It’s not another snake,” Billy said quietly, stopping in the Children’s section, as far as possible from the librarian and the front doors. “No snakes in the library.”

“Well then what is it?” Steve crossed his arms in front of his chest. His lower lip pouted out. Billy ran his tongue over his own lip.

“It’s,” he breathed.

A lock of hair fell over Steve’s forehead.

Billy stepped into Steve’s space, their toes touching, and Steve backed up as far as he could, pressing his back into the bookshelf, the Dr. Seuss section.

“What’re you doing?” Steve hissed. “We’re in the library -”

Billy pressed his lips to Steve's, hasty and hurried, working Steve's mouth open with his tongue and swallowing down the last of Steve's sentence.

For all Steve's protests, he kissed Billy as eagerly and Billy kissed him. Steve wrapped his arms around Billy's waist, pulling him in close.

Steve made a small sound when Billy slid his knee in between Steve's thighs. Steve rocked forward and Billy bent down for a moment, sliding his hands behind Steve's knees a lifting him up with a small grunt.

Steve moaned when Billy pressed him into the bookcase, grinding their hips together.

"Keep quiet, pretty boy," Billy hissed.

"It's hard to when you do that," Steve whispered back. He leaned in and slipped his arms around Billy's neck, locking his legs around Billy's waist.

He kissed Billy, hard, knotting his fingers in Billy's long hair, biting Billy's lip and then pulling away after a moment, just long enough for Billy to catch his breath. Then he kissed Billy again, soft this time, a gentle press of his lips, trailing kisses down Billy's jaw and to his ear.

Billy's breath hitched and he made a tiny sound.

"Keep quiet, pretty boy," Steve repeated, teasing, breath hot against Billy's ear.

They fumbled with their jeans, Steve squirming out of Billy's grip so he could stand, silently sliding their pants down to their knees.

Billy let out a silent breath, sliding his hands down Steve's hips and around his ass. Steve leaned in, encouraging.

"I don't have..." Billy trailed off, the unspoken word hanging in the loud silence of the library.

"Here." Steve barely made a sound but Billy saw his lips move. And

then Steve closed his fingers around Billy's wrist, dragging Billy's hand up to his mouth. He stared at Billy the whole time, he didn't break eye contact, didn't even blink, and he brought Billy's finger to his mouth, sucking on the pointer like he was stealing brownie batter from a mixing bowl.

Billy swallowed; he licked his lips.

It was awkward, complicated, standing up and being as silent as possible, quiet huffs and grunts in the back of the library, between the stacks, the ticks of the clock echoing along the wide ceiling, the hum of the fan by the front door, the rustling of the librarian with his pages, the occasional voice floating in the open windows from passersby outside.

A library wasn't a good place to fuck, but Billy sort of liked the danger in it. And anywhere Steve whispered his name like that, like a prayer, a mantra, was as good a place as any.

Steve wilted after a moment, he stopped panting, his grip on Billy's shirt loosened.

He was looking at Billy dazedly, his lips parted, something in his brown eyes that was almost sad, but Billy wasn't sure, he couldn't place the feeling.

He stopped, hand freezing, and licked his lips.

"Steve?" he murmured.

Steve's eyes brimmed with tears.

Billy panicked, heart racing. Had he done something wrong? Dear god, did he hurt Steve?

But then Steve smiled, so small, just a tiny quirk of his lips, and if Billy blinked he would've missed it.

"I love you," Steve whispered.

Everything in that moment seemed to stop, Billy's own ragged breathing, the crinkle of old paper as the librarian leafed through

pages, the creak of the front doors opening, the tick of the clock.

After a minute, Billy drew in a shaky breath and ducked his head, looking down at their bodies pressed together, skin flushed pink, sweat slicked.

He swallowed down the lump in his throat, and his voice was too creaky and unnaturally high. But he said it, out loud, to Steve; and not in his head as he fell asleep in his own bed; or as he slipped notes from Steve into his front pocket to read over and over; and not even on those rare and treasured nights they shared Steve's bed, after Steve fell asleep and Billy, too much of a coward to say it to him conscious, whispered it in the dark like a secret and let the three little words dissipate in the warm bedroom air. But he said it this time, and that's what really mattered.

"I love you, too."

It was frantic after that, still silent, but their breathing getting heavier. Billy had his forehead on Steve's shoulder, Steve's leg hoisted around Billy's waist, the other wobbly, barely holding himself up while Billy fingered him. Steve braced himself with one hand on Billy's shoulder, the other thrown out, palm flat against *Oh, The Places You'll Go!*

His head hit the back of the bookshelf, eyelids fluttering closed, biting his lip to keep quiet.

Suddenly Steve froze.

"Someone's coming," Steve hissed.

He ducked under Billy's arm and frantically pulled his pants up.

"What?" Billy whispered. His mind felt sluggish, interrupted from euphoria far too soon.

"Someone's *here*," Steve whispered, panicking. He zipped his fly and fumbled with Billy's pants, dragging them back up Billy's hips because Billy's hands couldn't seem to work right; they'd been all over Steve just moments ago and now -

Steve barely buckled the belt when small steps came around the corner.

“Steve?”

It was Mike Wheeler, holding his blonde baby sister’s hand, who tottered along beside him, sucking her thumb.

“Hey.” Steve gave him a sheepish wave.

Mike eyed Billy suspiciously.

“We were just, ah, looking for a book,” Steve said.

“In the children’s section?” Mike was skeptical.

Steve’s face reddened; he looked a loss for words.

Billy grabbed Steve’s hand and dragged him passed the two smallest Wheelers. “See you around.”

They haphazardly shoved their books and notes back into their bags and darted out of the library.

When Billy took Steve’s hand, knitting their fingers together, and led him towards the Camaro, Steve didn’t protest.

“You really love me, Harrington?” Billy asked an hour later, parked by the quarry, lying on the hood of his car, shielding the sun from his eyes and smoking a cigarette.

Steve sat cross-legged on the hood, Ray Bans on and *Othello* open in his lap.

He looked up from his book.

His hair was a mess, it stuck up in the back from being shoved against the leather seats, and he had a bright red hickey low on his neck, just above his collar. He hadn’t noticed it yet and Billy wasn’t going to tell him. Steve covered them up but Billy liked them to be

known; even though no one knew it was he who gave Steve Harrington a hickey, at least people knew that *someone* had given Steve Harrington a hickey. And they both admittedly liked the mystery of it.

Steve tilted his head at him, sunglasses slipping down his nose.

“Course I do. Dumbass.” He pushed his sunglasses back up, going back to *Othello* , reaching out to pluck the cigarette from Billy’s fingers and taking a long drag.

“Read to me.” Billy stole the cig back. He closed his eyes, scooting closer to Steve, who, flipping through the book, absentmindedly smoothed his hand over Billy’s forehead, tucking a lock of hair behind his ear.

“Which part?”

“The beginning.” Billy finished the cig and crushed the end between his fingers, flicking the butt into the grass. “Before it gets too sad.”

Steve rifled through the pages, pausing, finding a scene, and clearing his throat.

“And till she come, as truly as to heaven

I do confess the vices of my blood

So justly to your grave ears I'll present

How I did thrive in this fair lady's love

And she in mine.”